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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000229

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CVIS](#) [AMGT](#) [AEMR](#)

SUBJECT: TRIPWIRES FOR AUTHORIZED AND ORDERED DEPARTURE IN THE EVENT  
OF CATASTROPHIC FAILURE OF ELECTRICITY AND WATER SUPPLY

DERIVED FROM: DSCG 05-1 G

1.(C) Summary: Caracas Emergency Action Committee (EAC) convened on February 11, 2010, to review the current situation of electricity and water shortages as well as the GBRV imposed rationing. Core EAC members were in attendance. We assess that catastrophic failure of electricity and water supply systems endangering post operations and public safety is less than fifty percent. This message describes tripwires for authorized and ordered departures to deal with a worst case scenario. End Summary.

2.(C) Venezuela is approaching a severe electricity shortage due in part to a drought which has reduced water levels at its main hydroelectric facility at the Guri Dam on the Caroni River in eastern Venezuela which produces 70% of the nation's electrical power. If seasonal rains are delayed beyond the end of May 2010, the level of water could fall below the turbine intake point causing a collapse in generation capacity. Existing thermal generating capacity would cover, at most, 40% of demand leading to blackouts and draconian rationing. Fresh water levels at reservoirs in the Caracas metropolitan area have also been affected by drought, but the main threat is that massive electrical failure would degrade the pumping system that carries water from the main reservoir about 100 miles away to Caracas' higher elevation.

3.(C) In the worst case scenario of a total cut off in electrical power or water, the Chancery has diesel storage tanks that would fuel our emergency electrical generators (with conservation measures) for two weeks. Current water storage capacity would (with conservation measures) last about one week. The post is already experiencing municipal water rationing. The Chancery depends on our emergency storage tanks to make up for lost supply. We must take delivery of water by tank trucks at least every two weeks to top off emergency storage tanks. The Ambassador and DCM residences have diesel and water storage that would last for about a week. The Marine Security Guard residence does not have an electrical generator, but a swimming pool could provide non potable water in an emergency. All other American direct hire staff live in apartment buildings. All of these buildings have below ground water storage cisterns, which could supply water for one or two days in the event of a total disruption of the water supply, but none/none have emergency generators to supply the electric power to pump the water in the event of prolonged power blackouts.

4.(C) Rather than a total blackout over a period of weeks or longer, it is more likely that we would experience severe electrical rationing in Caracas for up to 16 hours a day. In this scenario hospitals, schools and supermarkets could also be challenged to maintain operations. The operation of the Chancery

in anywhere normal status would require continued access to diesel fuel and water delivered by tank truck. Fuel operation including delivery services were nationalized by the GBRV in September 2008. In a situation of massive shortages we anticipate that we would not receive priority assistance in securing supply of either diesel or water from the Venezuelan government. The worst case scenario could result in civil disturbances and looting that would lead to a further deterioration of living conditions in Caracas.

5.(C) The government of Venezuela is imposing electricity rationing and is trying to acquire more thermal capacity to mitigate the severe loss of electrical generating capacity at the Guri Dam in the event rains within the next three months do not begin to halt the drop in water level behind the dam. The Embassy has developed a series of tripwires to plan for authorized and ordered departure in the event that the collapse of electricity and water supply endangered the safety of our employees.

6.(C) Tripwires for Authorized Departure:

1A. Water supply behind the Guri Dam drops to the equivalent of three weeks of generating capacity.

1B. Severe electricity rationing in the Caracas area results in occasional civil disturbances.

1C. Emergency medical facilities used by Embassy families become inoperable.

1D. Diesel or water tank trucks that supply the Embassy become unreliable.

1E. Twenty-five percent of direct hire employees lose electricity power for 48 hours causing food spoilage and irregular water supply.

7.(SBU) Tripwires for Ordered Departure

To be determined.

8.(C) If commercial airline seats to the U.S. were not available on a timely basis in the event that we crossed our authorized departure tripwires, our response would be to request an American carrier who currently services Venezuela to put on an additional flight.

9.(C) In the still unlikely event authorized departure of embassy personnel became necessary it is likely that some private American citizens in Venezuela would also seek to leave, at least temporarily. If regular commercial air flights were insufficient to meet demand we would look to additional flights by U.S. carriers as the best alternative.

10.(SBU) Post has updated its Emergency Action Plan and has recently held training sessions exercises to familiarize key players with the plan. We will hold future exercises to better prepare for likely scenarios.

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